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...Descriptive Text for...

Here Shakespeare Lived. Elson Prints



Mary Arden's Cottage * Room in which
Shakespeare was born * Grammar School
and Guild Chapel * Shakespeare House *
In the Garden of Anne Hathaway's Cottage *
Anne Hathaway's Cottage * Interior of Trin-
ity Church * Bust of Shakespeare in Chancel
of Trinity Church * View of Memorial
Theater from Clopton Bridge * View of
Stratford from Memorial Theater * * * * *



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Mary Arden's Cottage.

"The house in Wilmcote, in which, as tradition declares, Mary Arden was born, is seen at the entrance to the village, and is conspicuous for its quaint dormer windows and for its mellow colors and impressive antiquity. Wilmcote is rougher in aspect than most of the villages of Warwickshire, and the country immediately around it is wild and bleak ; but the hedges are full of wild flowers, and are haunted by many birds ; and the wide, green, lonesome fields, especially when you see them in the gloaming, possess that air of melancholy solitude, — vague, dreamlike, and poetic rather than sad — which always strongly sways the imaginative mind.

"Inside the Mary Arden Cottage I saw nothing remarkable, except the massive old timbers."

By permission from "Gray Days and Gold," by William Winter, published by The Macmillan Company.

The Room in which Shakespeare Was Born.

According to tradition, Shakespeare was born on the second floor of the Henley Street house, over what was then used for a kitchen and living room. The room is approached by a very old and quaint stairway, with deep hollows worn in the middle of each stair, forcibly reminding one of the great age of the house.

The room itself is surprisingly small, and the ceiling so very low it can easily be touched with the hand by an average sized person. It is lighted by but one broad, low window of small, irregular panes of glass, on which are scrawled the signatures of hundreds of persons, varying in importance from Sir Walter Scott downward. Every available spot, even the ceiling of this room, is covered with autographs. One pillar by the side of the fireplace is called the “Actors’ Pillar,” as it seems to have been reserved for that profession. Among the signatures that of Edmund Kean is still legible.

This room has been repaired and restored many times, but it is not materially changed from its original condition. Parts of the old ceiling which were tumbling down have been secured by iron laths. The floor of the room is of roughly hewn planks, the boards hollowed by wear.

The cradle of the greatest genius that the world has ever seen could not have been more humble.

Grammar School and Guild Chapel.

The chapel and school were both founded by the Guild of the Holy Cross, a civil and religious fraternity dating back to the fourteenth century, possibly earlier. Very little is known of the early history of the school up to 1482, when Thomas Jolyffe, a priest of the guild, gave his lands at Stratford-on-Avon and Dodwell for its support, and so placed it on a permanent foundation.

The guild hall was on the ground floor and was used for purposes connected with the business of the guild.

This hall is especially associated with Shakespeare from the fact that here were given the dramatic performances in his day by players who came to Stratford. There is little doubt that here Shakespeare first witnessed the art of acting.

Here, too, in this hall were held the yearly feasts of the guild, and on one of the panels is an entry of the period of Henry VII., for provisions probably consumed at one of these feasts.

Above the guild hall is the famous Latin schoolroom where Shakespeare received his early education.

The room is still picturesque in the extreme, having been restored, no doubt, with that reverence for the old which marks nearly all English restorations of old buildings.

There are other rooms in the grammar school building, notably the armory, the council chamber, and the mathematical room.

At one end of the schoolroom is the lobby (a small chamber), which leads into the tower of the guild chapel. The chapel is now chiefly of interest for the exterior, which is hoary and crumbling with age.

The interior has been ruined by whitewash. Early in this century it was found that the walls were covered with frescoes illustrating the "Finding of the Holy Cross," the "Martyrdom of Thomas à Becket," and other subjects.

The guild was suppressed in the early part of the reign of Edward VI., but on petition of the inhabitants of Stratford was refounded, and since then the school has been known as Edward VI. School. The chapel is at extreme left of picture, and the grammar school adjoins it.

Shakespeare's House.

Shakespeare's birthplace, the most interesting spot in Stratford-on-Avon, is on the north side of Henley Street, a two-story cottage of timber and plaster. The age of the house is unknown, but the deed still exists, which shows that the poet's father, John Shakespeare, came into actual possession of the property in 1574. It is also proved by existing documents that John Shakespeare lived in Henley Street in 1554.

At the time of the poet's birth, in 1564, his father used the house for his home and for his place of business, carrying on there his trade of wool-stapler and Glover.

At the death of John Shakespeare, he left the house to his son William, who left it to his sister Joan; at her death to revert to his daughter Susanna, Mrs. Hart, and her heirs. Since then it has passed through many hands. Finally, funds were raised to rescue it from private individuals and save it for the public. It was then restored, as far as possible, to its original condition.

The little porch stands out into the street, after the ancient custom of houses in Stratford. On entering is the kitchen and living room of John Shakespeare. The ceiling is very low, and the floor is of flagstones, now broken into many pieces. The broad, low fireplace, with seats in the brick sides, is very suggestive of the home life of the Shakespeares, but the whole seems an humble setting for the towering genius growing up here.

The room on the right was originally the business portion, and is now used for a museum. Here are kept the rare copies of the poet's works, and all records and relics connected with him. At the back of the house is a garden filled with all the plants and flowers mentioned in the plays.

Anne Hathaway's Cottage.

Anne Hathaway's cottage stands in the little hamlet of Shottery, about a mile from Stratford-on-Avon. The pleasantest way of reaching it is by one of those beautiful little English foot-path ways, through fields dotted with wild flowers. It is a picturesque, thatched-roof cottage, built of wood and plaster, standing with the front towards a straggling old garden, and the side of the house towards the street. Small windows peep out from the projecting eaves, while roses and vines cluster lovingly over it.

Perhaps one gets nearer to Shakespeare the man here than at any other spot hallowed by his associations. The rural wildness of the scene seems a fit setting for the poet lover and the maiden who grew up here.

The Hathaways lived in Shottery for forty years before the marriage of their daughter Anne, and their initials can be seen today on the cupboard by the fireplace. The main room is low, with heavy beams, a rude stone floor, and a wide fireplace with cozy chimney corners. There is an old-fashioned settle in this room, which at one time stood outside the house. Upstairs an old bedstead is shown which belonged to Anne Hathaway. She is supposed to have lived here for some years after her marriage, while her husband was absent in London.

In 1892, this cottage was bought from the last private owner, and has since then been open to the public.

Holy Trinity Church.

Holy Trinity, the parish church of Stratford, stands picturesquely on the banks of the Avon, its pointed tower rising from amidst the trees which surround it. It is approached through an avenue of noble limes, and the whole atmosphere of the place seems to have the dignity and quiet beauty befitting the final resting place of the great poet.

In the chancel just inside the sanctuary rails is Shakespeare's grave and beside it that of his wife and children.

Apart from the associations with the immortal poet, the church is interesting in itself. It stands on the site of an older church built before the Norman Conquest.

As in many old structures, the different parts of the church are of different periods. The tower is the oldest, dating from the thirteenth century, — early Norman Gothic in style.

The most beautiful portion of the interior, however, is that shown in the picture, built in the fifteenth century.

There are many stained glass windows of more or less interest, one illustrating the “Seven Ages of Man.” Another is a window unveiled in 1896, the gift of Americans.

The church was formerly a collegiate one, but the revenues were taken from it by Henry VIII., and it is now supported partially by the corporation, under a charter of Edward VI., who also refounded the grammar school in Stratford.

Shakespeare's Bust in Trinity Church, Stratford.

The celebrated bust of Shakespeare, which is over his grave, is on the north side of the chancel of Trinity Church. It was placed here about seven years after his death, probably with the approval of his family, and is considered the most important likeness of the poet.

The bust is supposed to have been cut by one Gerard Jonson, a native of Amsterdam, and a “tomb maker,” who lived in Southwark. He cut it from soft stone and colored it to represent life, as was the custom at that time. For nearly a century and a quarter it was untouched, but it had become gradually defaced, and then needed retouching. At this time John Ward, the grandfather of Mrs. Siddons, the actress, gave a performance of “Othello” in the Guild Hall of Stratford, giving the proceeds for the purpose of freshening and restoring the bust.

Fifty years later, Mr. Malone, the commentator of Shakespeare, wishing to do a similar good deed, but without the requisite judgment, caused it to be covered with several coats of white paint, thereby injuring the expression of the face. In 1861, it was restored, as nearly as possible, to its original condition.

The face and hands are flesh colored, the eyes being light hazel, and the hair and beard auburn. The suit worn consists of a black, sleeveless gown over a scarlet doublet. The top of the cushion is green and the lower part crimson. A quill pen is now in the hand, in place of the original stone one, which was broken. Directly beneath the bust Shakespeare lies buried, and on the stone in the floor are the well-known lines:—

“ Good friend for Jesus sake forbear
To digg the dust enclosed heare ;
Blese be ye man yt spares thes stones
And curst be he yt moves my bones.”

The Shakespeare Memorial Building.

The Shakespeare Memorial Building, which stands upon the banks of the Avon, was built by public subscription, Mr. Flower generously giving the site, and also contributing largely towards the expense of the building. The corner-stone was laid with Masonic rites, by Lord Leigh, on the poet's birthday, in 1877. The building is in early Elizabethan style, and the interior is more imposing than one is led to expect from the outside. A beautiful stairway of stone and marble is lighted with lancet windows of stained glass, on which are represented the scenes from the "Seven Ages of Man."

On the ground floor is a very valuable library of Shakespeariana, mostly the gift of private persons. On the second floor is the picture gallery, containing a collection of portraits of Shakespeare, also paintings illustrating his plays, and portraits of celebrated actors and actresses. On the walls are large panels of terra-cotta, representing scenes from the plays. The rest of the building is devoted to the Memorial Theater, where, in April of each year, in honor of the poet's birthday, one of his plays is always presented.

The theater is beautifully decorated, has every appointment, and a seating capacity for eight hundred. At its opening, in 1879, a remarkable series of performances were given, many noted actors and actresses taking part. Directly back of the theater, towards Trinity Church, stands the celebrated Shakespeare monument, by Sir Ronald Gower.

Stratford from the Memorial Building.

The view of Stratford from the tower of the Memorial Building is extensive and beautiful, a typical English landscape. Below, by the side of the winding Avon, lies the town of Stratford, with its ancient houses and crooked streets. Trinity Church tower nestles among the trees near by, and the surrounding country, quiet and pastoral, suggests scenes of rural life.

We are in the heart of England, in Warwickshire, sometimes called the garden of England, and about twelve miles from the town of Warwick, with its great castle, so important in Feudal times. The roads in all directions are interesting, both from their natural loveliness and from the fact that Shakespeare must have known them. How Stratford looked in his time is a matter of some conjecture, for the town then numbered 1,400 inhabitants, while to-day there are nearly 10,000.

The little town, built then entirely of timber, is now a busy place, and since 1664 has been governed by a mayor and corporation. Stratford existed for several centuries before the Norman Conquest, and its ancient records, which have been carefully preserved, are valuable and interesting. During the reign of Edward VI. it was governed by a bailiff, alderman, and burgesses. Shakespeare's father was high bailiff at one time. Before 1553, the government was in the hands of the Order of the Holy Cross. The old Guild Hall, with the school of the order adjoining, where young Shakespeare received his early education, are among the most venerable and interesting objects in the town to-day.

Stratford was not spared the plague, and three severe fires have at different times greatly damaged it, yet to-day it still presents a sufficiently quaint and picturesque aspect to satisfy our ideal of Shakespeare's home.



Mary Arden's Cottage.

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The Grammar School and Guild Chapel - Stratford



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Shakespeare House - Stratford



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In the Garden of Ann Hathaway's Cottage



Ann Hathaway's Cottage

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Trinity Church - Stratford on Avon



In the year 1740, W. H. Phillips, F.R.S. an eminent Shakespearean scholar, who had a law suit, the latter portion of the monument was destroyed by his Heiress and Executor, Ernest & Baker 1741

ANNO DOMINI 1564 APRILIS 23 DIE
 BONAERIE CIVITATIS STRATFORDI
 IN ECCLESIA TRINITATIS
 WILLELMUS SHAKESPEARE CIVIS
 STRATFORDIENSIS OBIIIT
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 WILLELMUS SHAKESPEARE CIVIS
 STRATFORDIENSIS OBIIIT
 ET SEPULTUS EST IN ECCLESIA
 TRINITATIS STRATFORDIENSIS
 IN ECCLESIA TRINITATIS
 STRATFORDIENSIS

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*Bust of Shakespeare, Trinity Church, Stratford
 (his grave is directly beneath the bust)*



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Shakespeare Memorial and Avon from Clifton Bridge



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Stratford from Memorial Theatre